July • 5¢

Equality

THE AMERICAN WAY ★ EQUAL RIGHTS AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL

WHY the Whitewash OF THE CHRISTIAN FRONT?

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The real meaning of the Brooklyn Trials

Why the Whitewash of the Christian Front?

The Real Meaning of the Brooklyn Trials

THE Christian Front trial is over. The jury has acquitted nine defendants, has "disagreed on"—and thus virtually acquitted—five others.

Father Coughlin is joyous: "The Christian Front movement will emerge more vigorous and potent than ever." And then a threat: "The resentment on the part of the victims is liable to increase the wave of anti-Semitism throughout the country, particularly as the jury has found them not guilty."

That is pretty clear. Now that it is not criminal to plan violence, to plot provocations and murders and to organize the destruction of minority groups, the Christian Front can and will move ahead with its program. It has no fear of interruptions. Restraint will not be necessary.

The story does not end with the acquittal.

Neither does the fight against the Christian Front and Coughlinism.

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The records of the Christian Front trial present unquestionable proof of a gigantic nation-wide plot to form a storm troop army with units in all parts of the country. They prove that these storm troop units contain within their ranks arsonists, bombers, would-be murderers, agents provocateurs, rioters, and fanatical agitators. The proof comes from the mouths of the defendants themselves. It is further verified by the activities of the Christian Front within the past fifteen months, by its street riots, its stabbings, and its campaign of terrorism in New York City and other parts of the country.

Evidence revealed, too, that several members of the National Guard were involved in this net of intrigue. Several hundred members of the New York City Police Department have been linked with the Christian Front. Witness Denis Healy testified that at a meeting in Erasmus Hall the Christian Frontists were planning to provoke a fight, and were told that if they became entangled with uniformed police they need not worry as they would be released around the corner. The terrorists were confident throughout of success because they felt that they had support from large numbers of police. Consistent evidence of police partiality and even complicity lend frightful credence to the boast.

The men who were on trial on the charge of conspiring to overthrow and destroy the government of the United States were not the naive, "misled," "overpatriotic" bunglers that a large portion of the metropolitan press editorially attempted to make them out—as even the *prosecution* virtually attempted to prove. Yet it is true that in themselves they are not the sole dangerous force. In the first place, they are but a small outgrowth of a larger diseased whole. The Christian Front movement was and is not concentrated in the hands of the fourteen men who were placed in the dock. It is not concentrated in New York. It is a nation-wide intrigue that

VOL. 2 JULY, 1940 No. 7

Equality

An Independent, Non-Sectarian Monthly Journal to Defend Democratic Rights and Combat Racial and Religious Intolerance

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Published monthly and copyright, 1940, by Equality Publishers, Inc., a non-profit body, 512 Fifth Ave., New York, N. Y. Single copies 15c. Subscription $1.50 a year. Canada and foreign $2.00 a year. Entered as second-class matter May 18, 1939, at the Post Office of New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879.
PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

has boiled over in big cities elsewhere in the country.

But the most important fact of all, the fact which the prosecution scrupulously avoided, was that these men, vicious, murderous, insane with stupid hate, drugged with a mumbo-jumbo of religious fervor and psychopathic dreams of grandeur, *are only the tools of bigger men.*

The higher-ups! What of them? Father Charles E. Coughlin, who planned for them, set the stage, spurred them on to the plotting of mass rioting and assassination, who consistently doped them with the poisonous ingredients for their conspiracy, who served as their instructor in the borrowed art of Nazi terrorism. Father Edward Lodge Curran, whom witnesses described as the anti-Semitic agitator who had drawn them into the Christian Front. The editors of the *Brooklyn Tablet*, who provided them with a propaganda outlet in an official diocesan organ.

Yes, the higher-ups! They are to be found even in the halls of Congress, and in the committees of that Congress, committees which allowed the Christian Front to plot undisturbed while they concentrated their insidious attacks upon progressive organizations.

These higher-ups are the men who have been supplying the *millions* of dollars which have been necessary for the tremendous campaign which the Christian Front and its allied organizations have been conducting under the leadership of Father Coughlin.

These men have not been touched. No investigation has been made of them. On the contrary, every care has been taken to avoid treading on their toes. *Equality* is but one of a dozen organizations that have supplied the Federal Bureau of Investigation with meticulously documented evidence of behind-the-scenes machinations, evidence running into hundreds of pages, evidence that supplied, without the slightest doubt, all the necessary links between the string-pullers and the puppets. Yet despite all the undeniable evidence, G-Man J. Edgar Hoover was at pains to say, on the day after the seventeen plotters were apprehended, that he "understood that the Rev. Charles E. Coughlin, radio priest, had no connection with the Christian Front. . ." (*New York Herald Tribune*, Jan. 15, 1940). Hoover went out of his way to set Father Coughlin apart from the indicted men, to isolate seventeen men from the man who told them what to do.

TO OUR READERS

The crucial significance of the verdicts in the Brooklyn anti-Semitic cases impels *Equality* to rush to press with this emergency publication. It seems preferable to gain immediate wide circulation for a timely statement rather than delay publication until an issue of normal size can be produced.

The next issue will include the best articles and features originally planned for both the July and August numbers. Mail subscriptions will be extended one month.

Protests followed. Four days later, on January 18, twelve prominent Christian clergymen and educators demanded, in a telegram to Hoover, that Father Coughlin be investigated. Among the signers of the demand were Dr. John Haynes Holmes and Dr. Guy Emery Shipler, noted Protestant leaders; and Professors Franz Boas and Clyde Miller of Columbia University. These men constituted but one of hundreds of groups, large and small, which demanded a probe of the real culprits—Coughlin and his backers.

The evidence was now certainly too obvious to ignore, and the inaction in the face of such protest was putting a suspicious color on the reticence of the F. B. I. It was then that investigations were promised.

What has happened to these investigations?

1. Attorney-General Jackson announced that he was assigning the head of the criminal division of the Department of Justice to investigate the backers of the Christian Front. Strangely enough, the matter has died. Nothing has been heard about the information uncovered.

2. The Dies Committee, quick to attack women shoppers' organizations for criticizing manufacturers of adulterated products, promised an investigation which somehow never materialized and has not since been heard of—which is not surprising in view of the links between the Christian Front and Dies himself previously pointed out in this magazine.

3. Commissioner Valentine's probe of the police force succeeded in ferreting out a fraction of the members who belonged to the Christian

Front, but as far as has been revealed, nothing has happened to them.

4. Governor Lehman promised an investigation of the National Guard, following the discovery that eight of the trial defendants belonged to it; but this investigation, too, has passed into limbo.

5. The desks in Mayor LaGuardia's office are crammed with reports on the Christian Front gathered by his assistant, Byrnes MacDonald. These reports are buried. They are not being used.

There is only one conclusion to be distilled from these and other similarly damaging facts: the instigators of violence, the real plotters, the true higher-ups, the men who pull the strings and pay the money, are not being touched! They are being consciously ignored. They are being *wilfully overlooked*. No other conclusion is possible when it is understood that all the evidence pointing to them is in the hands of the F. B. I.

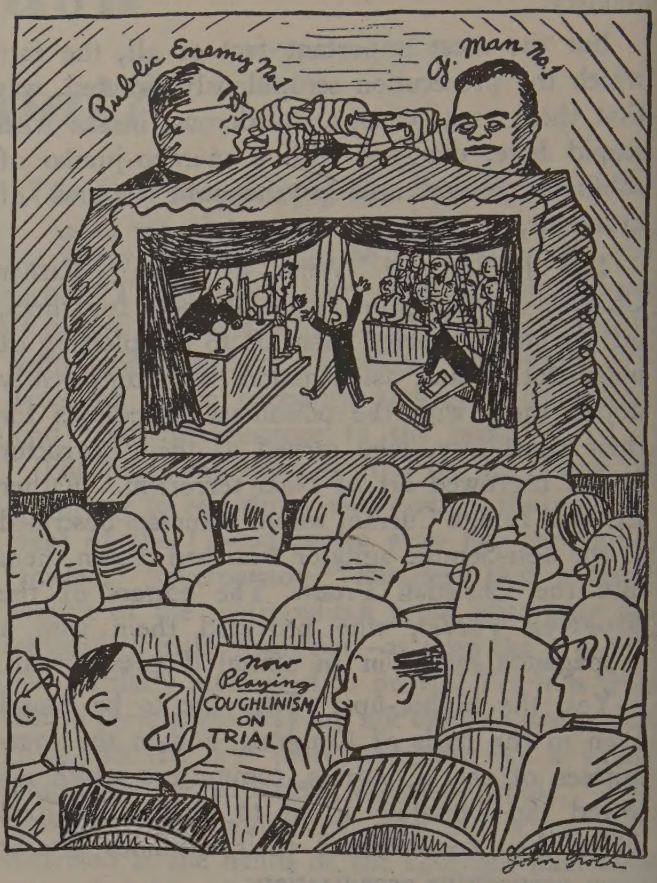
The higher-ups now know that they have been provided with a clear track. They know that they will not be hindered, that they will not be embarrassed by investigations. They are fully aware that the green light has been flashed on, and that they are now free to incite to murder and hatred. Nobody in the seats of power is going to restrain them.

Father Coughlin makes no bones about his future program. "The Christian Front movement will emerge more vigorous and potent than ever," he says (*New York Times*, June 26, 1940). And he adds, with his customary insidious craftiness, that anti-Semitism will now increase because of the "persecution" which his followers have undergone.

This, then, is what we can now expect—a terrifying campaign of Jew-baiting. Again—the stabbings, the brawls, the subway demonstrations, the garbage-fed propaganda, the street corner demagogues with their black-jack toting bodyguards and strong-arm men. The obstacles have now been removed.

The F. B. I., the Department of Justice, the various police units in New York City and elsewhere must bear the blame for what may result from Father Coughlin's threats. These law-enforcement units, now showing an alarming readiness to harass labor unions and progressive groups, are thinking more than twice about irking the priest who for more than two years has been

WE HIT THE NAIL ON THE HEAD



"Say, this isn't the show we bought tickets for."
[Reprinted from May *Equality*, published early in the trials.]

acting as the American outlet for official Nazi propaganda.

How can such a situation be allowed to exist? How can morality and justice be so tortured and twisted as to allow such men complete freedom to wreck democratic institutions?

Those who refuse to bring Coughlin and the men who are backing him to trial are guilty of aiding and abetting their campaign of terrorism and destruction.

One thing must be done. Get the higher-ups! The F. B. I. has the information it needs. Why doesn't it act now?

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The press, too, must bear its share of the blame. New York newpapers like the *Daily News* and the *Herald-Tribune* constantly played the role of apologists for the Christian Front plotters. They were portrayed as "over-zealous patriots" who had merely carried their love of country a bit too far. Stories of the trial which, if honestly and fully reported would have revealed the true fascistic nature of the defense, were briefly treated and buried in the back pages.

The only aspects of the trial which received much attention were the anti-Semitic utterances of the defendants and their specious claim that they were "defending the nation against Communism." These items received display; they were presented in such a way as to influence the reader himself into believing them.

The New York Times on occasion referred to the Christian Front as "an American organization" opposed to Communism—as if this put the pure white mantle of innocence over its terroristic Nazi character. All of the New York newspapers have files filled with material on Christian Front-inspired riots, stabbings and incitements—but a seeming conspiracy of silence has kept all of it from their news columns. We know of one case in which a story brought in by a reporter was sent to the executive office and there suppressed.

There is not a major newspaper in New York that had the courage to come out with the facts it has on hand—facts which would make the true character of the Christian Front and other local fascist movements so clear to the people of the city that the organizations would be crushed by a wave of public indignation and danger. These papers have often taken the lead in organizing campaigns of hysteria against alleged "fifth columnists" in labor unions, progressive organizations, and leftist groups; yet not one will take the lead in organizing a campaign that has a far more secure, honest, and urgent basis—an educational campaign on the activities of the Christian Front and its satellite and allied organizations.

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The trial itself was a farce. It was allowed to become so from the very first day. Prospective jurors were asked the following questions:

Do you read the Daily Mirror? Life Magazine? Look? Pic? The Daily Worker? New Masses? New Republic?

Are you or any of your relatives affiliated with the American League for Peace and Democracy? The American Youth Congress? The American Student Union? The Abraham Lincoln Brigade? Are you a member of the American Labor Party?

Those who answered yes to any of these questions were not chosen as jurors. Those who belonged to organizations combating intolerance could not have been chosen for the jury. Those who complained to the police of magazine salesmen selling outside their homes could not be on the jury.

The following questions, however, were *not* asked:

1. *Do you read Social Justice?*
2. *Are you or any relative affiliated with the Christian Front?*
3. *Do you read the Tablet?*
4. *Are you a follower of Father Coughlin?*
5. *Have you ever contributed to the Parents' Defense Fund, organized to pay trial expenses for the defendants?*

These questions were not asked. It is conceivable, then, that some members of the jury may have been members of the Christian Front. The prosecution never bothered asking.

It is almost certain that some of them were reached by the Parents' Defense Fund, which blanketed Brooklyn.

Father Coughlin's *Social Justice* was sold in the courthouse corridors, and the courtroom was packed daily with cheering, noisy arrogant friends and relatives of the defendants. Something like a picnic atmosphere pervaded the courtroom itself with all concerned fraternizing like one big family between sessions.

No attempts were made by the defense to answer rationally the charges made. When it was shown that the plotters had made bombs and had stolen arms and ammunition with the intention of killing people, John Cassidy, leader of the Christian Frontists, shouted: "Long live Christ the King! Down with Communism!" It was the same tactic that the Nazis used in Germany during the rise of Hitler. Brought into the courts for stabbings and other crimes, they shouted "Down with Communism" and so impressed the prosecutors that they were acquitted. Coughlin and his stooges have learned well.

Florence Bushnell, a relative of one of the defendants, told an *Equality* reporter that the attorneys for the defense were themselves members of the Christian Front. Asked if she thought there was any tie-up between the prosecution and the defense lawyers, she smiled knowingly.

These are but a few in a long line of suspicious factors, not the least of which was Prosecutor Harold M. Kennedy's hearty congratulations to the defendants at the end of the trial. Even the *New York Times,* which, like most of the city papers had paid attention to the trial chiefly when

the defendants were preaching "anti-Communism," was forced to admit that Kennedy acted more like a school teacher gently lecturing a group of children than as a vigorous prosecutor with hundreds of crushing facts at his disposal.

The defendants were permitted to make martyrs of themselves. Their attorney, Leo Healy, used every possible trick to confuse and intimidate the jury. "If you convict these boys, the Communists will hail you as heroes," he told the jurors. Aware of the fact that several of the jurors were Catholics, he tried to paint the entire trial as a religious matter—an attack on Catholic boys. He wound up by saying he would like to shoot a few Communists himself and would like to hang a few thousand from lamp posts. A word or two about religion, and his case was presented. No facts, no reason, no logic, no law.

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What a sad commentary on American justice! The defendants included men pledged to assassinate and terrorize. Their movement had carried out part of its program on the streets of New York, where it had struck terror into the hearts of the Jewish population and on more than a dozen occasions had caused Jewish blood to run. Witnesses spoke of "eradicating" all Jews in the United States, of secret plots to assassinate several Congressmen. It was testified that they were going to bomb the headquarters of organizations which opposed them, that they were going to provoke an uprising and then crush it with guns and bullets. Yet all these things, under the interpretation placed upon them by the jury, are not crimes. It is not, in democratic America, a crime to torment, torture, provoke and openly, falsely and maliciously attack a helpless and harassed minority group; it is not a crime to store guns and bullets for future killings. These things are not crimes. The jury has absolved the criminals and has in effect told them and their fascist compatriots throughout the nation that the way is clear for their assault on American democratic rights and institutions. If these things are not crimes, then they can be carried on with impunity by Christian Frontists, Silver Shirts and the like—all under the smokescreen of fighting "Communism," "fifth columns" and other mythical bogeys.

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Ten weeks of shadow-boxing in a pleasant, convivial atmosphere. Then a whitewash. A whitewash of the *real* fascist plotters against our democratic way of life, capped by the final irony of the defense attorney complimenting the prosecution!

All this is no mere slip-up, no case of bungling. The facts for an iron-clad case were available to the prosecution in great detail. They had been supplied, long ago, to the F. B. I. by *Equality* and by other organizations, including Catholic groups that were disturbed over the spectacle of terrorists masquerading in the garb of religion.

We must accept the inescapable conclusion that the prosecution, the government, did not really want to convict the defendants (except perhaps one or two scapegoats).

This suspicion is buttressed by several facts. Father Coughlin expressed that precise opinion in the July 1 *issue of* Social Justice. *Let the arch-conspirator himself speak:*

"Neither the government of the United States, nor the Federal Bureau of Investigation of the Department of Justice had any enthusiasm for this paper-thin 'conspiracy.'"

What seems so obvious to Father Coughlin seems equally obvious now to a growing number of people. And Prosecutor Kennedy drove it an inch deeper by his declaration, during his summation, that "the avowed purposes of the Christian Front are good, sound American principles."

Mr. Kennedy, the government representative at the trial, was not at all out of sympathy with the purposes of the Christian Front according to his own words. This, too, is worth considering.

Reflect on this contrast:

1. On the one hand, *real* fascist plotters, caught dead to rights inciting violence and assembling munitions for insurrectionary purposes, go scot free. Almost at the moment of the arrests, F. B. I. Chief Hoover exonerates Plot Instigator Coughlin; at the conclusion of the trials, Coughlin congratulates Hoover!

2. On the other hand, imaginary bogeys are manipulated to create a nation-wide hysteria wave directed at groups least able to defend themselves: at first-generation Americans of unquestioned loyalty; at little handfuls of teamsters and furriers for "combining" in supposed violation of an anti-trust law passed to curb business monopoly; at Jehovah's Witnesses who never harmed a hair on anybody's head but have religious scruples against saluting a flag, any flag; at anti-fascists who believe in civil liberties and

the extension of democratic rights; at members of political minorities who, whatever sweeping changes they may want, spend their time in peaceful persuasion. And all this witch-hunt, sad to say, recruiting support from inside a national administration that was put into office in 1936 to implement the democratic way of life!

Consider well what is happening.

Anti-alienism has become a major passion in the halls of Congress. The Smith Omnibus Bill, H. R. 5138, has already passed both houses. It calls for fingerprinting and registering aliens, and makes it possible to send to prison for ten years the author or publisher of any anti-war sentiment that might conceivably fall into the hands of a soldier or sailor! More than a hundred similar bills, threatening the freedom of both foreign-born and native-born, are in various stages of consideration in Congress.

Anti-alienism is only a short step removed from anti-Semitism. Both thrive in the same climate. When certain of the powers that be are so anxious to promote anti-alienism, is it any wonder that they hesitate to punish the fomenters of anti-Semitic conspiracy and violence?

If we want to fight against anti-Semitism, against Coughlinism, we must fight against the reactionary trends of which they are a part.

The soil that nourishes anti-Semitism also gives sustenance to anti-alien hysteria, to persecution of religious and political minorities, to illegal raids by the F. B. I. and other law-enforcement agencies, to scuttling of anti-lynching and anti-poll tax legislation, to prosecution of trade unions and crippling of labor legislation, to purges of suspected "reds" from W.P.A., to slashing of relief and social services to pay for armaments, to conscription and militarization of youth.

This way lies the road to war and dictatorship in America. Some may be deceived into taking the road in the belief they are moving against Nazism. This is a delusion. By setting up Hitlerism in America we shall not end Hitlerism in Europe. The place to fight Nazism is here

EQUALITY CALLS THE SCORE

Since May 1939, *Equality* has consistently championed racial and religious tolerance. It has championed American democracy and the rights of the victims of anti-Semitism and Coughlinite violence. Again and again it has been the first to call the score on the so-called Christian Front and its plotting against the democratic system. It has documented facts, named names, sounded timely warnings.

Observe the record:

MAY 1939: *Equality* called on Catholic Hierarchy to "stop the activities of those Catholics who are swerving from their allegiance to American democratic institutions."

OCTOBER 1939: *Equality* issued famous Open Letter to Archbishop Spellman giving detailed inside picture of Christian Front plotting, including formation of platoons of twenty-five, "sports clubs" for terroristic training, Trojan horse tactics in police department and National Guard, and incitements to obtain arms and fight in "the Franco way." Pleaded with him to publicly disassociate the Catholic Church in New York City from this movement.

FEBRUARY 1940: *Equality,* following arrest of Brooklyn defendants, called on F. B. I. to investigate the chief culprits, including Father Coughlin, leader and teacher of the Christian Front. Renewed plea to Catholic Hierarchy to repudiate movement, naming its most active centers.

MARCH 1940: *Equality* published most detailed documented exposure ever prepared of Father Coughlin's movement to subvert democracy behind the mask of religion. Joined with Catholics, Protestants, and Jews in deploring his profanation of a great faith.

APRIL 1940: *Equality* spread consternation in Christian Front when information about activities "leaked out" through its columns, first witness at Brooklyn trials testifies.

MAY 1940: *Equality* article, "A Catholic at the Brooklyn Trials," foreshadowed whitewash early in proceedings, describing how jury was selected and how prosecution muffed case by protecting Christian Front and Father Coughlin.

Equality is on guard for *your* civil and religious liberties, as Catholics, as Protestants, as Jews, as Americans.

Read and support *Equality!*

in America, where for years Father Coughlin has served as its chief transmission belt.

Those who refuse to investigate and act against Father Coughlin in America cannot be fundamentally opposed to fascism as such anywhere else in the world. We are entitled to suspect their motives and say "No, thank you!" to their witch-hunts and wars.

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Think *this* over!

1. Ninety-three per cent of the American people want *peace*. They have made that clear. They know that war and movements in preparation for war results in fascism *at home*.

2. The administration in Washington has clearly indicated that it is overlooking this basic demand of the people for peace.

3. The fight for peace is being carried on by labor unions, youth groups, progressive organizations.

4. In every corner of the United States these groups are being suppressed and attacked! But fascist organizations like the Christian Front are allowed to attack racial, religious, and political minorities with the virtual aid of the administration and pro-war forces. *They*—the fascist groups —are *not* being attacked. What is this, then, if not an actual alliance?

What groups are being crushed?

What groups are being aided?

Think *that* over. It will make a lot of other things clear.

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In addressing you, *Equality* assumes that you sincerely detest anti-Semitism, intolerance, and all pitting of creed against creed and race against race, and want to do something about it. What can you do?

Equality invites you to join forces with its efforts. Around this magazine are committees of readers actively helping in the fight for civil and religious liberty. Communicate with us. Read *Equality* and get others to do so. Rally around groups in your neighborhood or community that work for civil rights and peace. Write your Congressmen and Senators; tell them where you stand on anti-alien and witch-hunting legislation. Write letters to your newspaper. Organize delegations to visit your local and national legislators. Pass resolutions in your organizations and send them to Congress and the President. Arrange for talks in your local radio stations. Call mass meetings in your locality.

Above all, don't allow yourself to be swept away in the wave of hysteria that threatens the fundamental American values of democracy, civil liberties, tolerance, and peace. These values must be fought for. The crime of the Christian Front acquittal could not have occurred in a period of sane thinking and social progress.

YOU NEED US; WE NEED YOU

EQUALITY helps you fight your battle.

It combats the forces of intolerance and reaction.

It combats Coughlinism, which masquerades as a Christian Front to stir up religious hatred and pit American against American preparatory to subverting democracy.

It combats the Ku Klux Klan, with its anti-Catholic, anti-Jewish, anti-Negro program, and all similar vigilante and terrorist movements.

It combats the war propagandists, knowing that peace and civil liberties, like war involvement and repression, go hand in hand.

It fights for democratic rights and the American way.

EQUALITY, a non-profit enterprise dedicated to these ends, urgently requests your support to carry on its work. Will you help?

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